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THE TWO WORLDS

Bagamoyo and Slavery in the 19th Century

Department for Antiquities/Catholic Museum
BAGAMOYO

Occasional Paper

CPHE

Bagamoyo and Slavery in the 19th Century

THE TWO WORLDS

The on slave based society in Bagamoyo and surroundings

The slave free society on the Catholic compound.

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As the main terminus of the East African central trade route and because of the proximity to the central slave market in Zanzibar Bagamoyo was very much affected by the East African slave trade during the 19th century. Exact statistics are not available. We follow Paul L. Lovejoy ("Transformation of slavery", Cambridge University Press, 1997) and take documents from the Archives of the Catholic Church in Bagamoyo.

In Bagamoyo we realize the existing of two different worlds: the slave based society and the slave free society at the same time and in the same place.

We give our report under the following sub-headings:

1. Statistics about slavery in East Africa;
2. Numbers of slaves in Bagamoyo and surroundings;
3. Live of the slaves in Bagamoyo and surroundings;
4. Sex and age distribution among the slaves;
5. Final conclusions.

1. Statistics about slavery in East Africa:

1.1. Taken into slavery in East Africa:

800–1600	1600–1700	1700–1800	1800–1896
800,000	100,000	400,000	695,000

= 1.995,000 (1)

1.2. Slaves taken to in the 19th century:

Arabia, Persia, India:	347,000 = 23,3%
South East Africa:	276,000 = 18,6%
Reunion, Mauritius:	95,000 = 6,4%
East African Coast:	796,000 = 51,7%

1.514.000 = 100% (2)

Comparing both statistics we see that even the same author (Lovejoy) gets different statistics following different sources. "East Africa" means here Zanzibar and Pemba where slaves were working on the spices-farms and the East African coast where the plantation work was based on slaves.

Those slaves who were not retained on the East African mainland coast passed mostly Bagamoyo on their way to the slave market in Zanzibar.

Lovejoy gives also the following statistics:

1.3. Slaves retained in Zambia and Pemba and at the East African Coast:

in the 1810s:	35,000	in the 1860s:	142,000
in the 1820s:	40,000	in the 1870s:	188,000
in the 1830s:	60,000	in the 1880s:	28,000
in the 1840s:	147,000	in the 1890s:	18,000
in the 1850s:	111,000		769,000
			(51,7%) (3)

Around Bagamoyo we have rice farms and other agricultural farms. The growing population of Zanzibar demanded more and more agricultural products. The caravan porters had to be provided with food while staying in Bagamoyo and food supply for their way back. Agriculture, based on slaves work, became one of the main sectors of the towns economy.

The estimated population of Bagamoyo was:

1868 about 1,000 houses,
1885 about 4,000 – 5,000 people,
1890 about 10,000 – 15,000 people (4).

We do not have statistics about the different groups in Bagamoyo. We follow John Iliffe ("Modern History of Ta-

nganyika", Cambridge University Press, 1994) for 1890 (5): 400 Arabs, 1,000 Indians, free Africans, about 1,000 slaves. These are the figures of the slave based society in the town of Bagamoyo. At the same time existed on the compound of the Catholic Church in Bagamoyo a slave free society as we shall see.

2. Numbers of slaves in Bagamoyo and surroundings:

We do not have statistics. We can only estimate if we take the statistics from the documents of the Catholic Church in Bagamoyo. The catholic missionaries ransomed slaves and they got liberated slaves from British and French Anti-Slavery ships. All these ex-slaves were settled in the "Christian Freedom Village" in Bagamoyo. Here a slaves free society existed.

2.1. Ransomed slaves (from "Records of Ransoming"):

1870	170	
1871	200	
1872	324	
1873	325	
1877	220	
1880		70 families
1881	104	
1882	34	
	1.377	+ 70 families (= about 290 persons).

2.2. Slaves freed by Britisch and French Anti-Slavery ships:
(Taken from the "Bagamoyo Journal Summary")

1871	36
1872	63
1873	185

1874	25
1875	29
	338

More and more slave trades smuggled slaves from the mainland to Zanzibar. Not from the town Bagamoyo, but from places nearby. More and more British and French Anti-Slavery ships patrolled between the mainland and Zanzibar and brought liberated slaves to the "Catholic Freedom Village" in Bagamoyo.

1,715 liberated slaves were living in the "Christian Freedom Village" in Bagamoyo. Soon the number of such villages expanded to six "Freedom Villages". How many non freed slaves lived in the town and surroundings we do not know. But we know to which work they were forced: in the coconut-plantations and on the agricultural farms.

3. Life of the slaves in Bagamoyo and surroundings

In Bagamoyo Said bin Awadh Magram introduced, according to Walter T. Brown in "Bagamoyo-An Historical Introduction", soon after his arrival in the late 1850s coconut trees. By 1885 he had accumulated numerous slaves and extensive householdings; his biggest being the caravan stop Shamba Gomera, few miles to the West of Bagamoyo. Coconut plantations were soon started also by others. Soon slaves worked on these farms (6).

Zanzibar imported, as we saw, from Bagamoyo agricultural products for the growing population. The growing demand could be fulfilled only by the work of slaves.

The caravan porters arriving in Bagamoyo needed food. In the 1880s, 100,000 porters travelled on the central trade route from the interior to Bagamoyo. From 1901 – 1904 21, 132 arrived in Bagamoyo every year and 32,6647 left Bagamooyo (7). The Caravan porters were

Wanyamwezi, Wasukuma and Wanyema. The economy of Bagamoyo was based on slavery. But not only in Bagamoyo. It was like this all over the East African coast. Plantation slavery spread soon to many places where "Arabs" and Swahilis had business centres. According to Iliffe ("Modern History of Tanganyika, Cambridge University press, 1994) the slaves coming from the interior were regarded as "Watumwa wajinga" (ignorant slaves) and "Washenzi" (pagans)compared with the coastal Islamic culture. Iliffe says (pp 74/5): "The plantation slaves generally worked for their masters 5 days a week, leaving the remaining time for their own plots. Their social life was little supervised ; but they could be sold and bought." (8) So the slaves were despised and without any human rights; except those in the "slave-free society" of the Catholic Church.

4. Sex and age distribution among the slaves

Again: We have no statistics. We can give only those statistics from the "Records of Baptisms" of the Catholic Church in Bagamoyo for the ransomed slaves. For this "slaves free society" we have all records. We take the records from1870-1885 because records from 1886, 1887 and 1888 are partly lost and slavery slowly dried out in the 1890s.

4.1. a: Sex distribution:

Year	Males	Females	Ransomed	Ransoming not mentioned
1870	-	2	2	-
1871	65	21	73	13
1872	20	55	67	8
1873	38	29	63	4
1874	29	11	26	14
1875	31	12	38	6

1876	23	24	41	6
1877	21	8	23	6
1878	39	45	78	6
1879	14	12	20	6
1880	28	4	22	10
1881	17	13	20	10
1882	21	15	26	10
1883	9	4	8	5
1884	27	23	54	5
1885	39	45	70	14
	421	323		

4.1.b: Age of the baptized ex-slaves from 0- 19 years:

Year	Under 1	1 – 9	10-20	age not mentioned.
1870	1	1	-	-
1871	4	6	61	2
1872	1	3	57	10
1873	3	6	44	-
1874	-	4	34	-
1875	4	13	25	-
1876	12	4	18	8
1877	9	9	5	4
1878	19	24	25	-
1879	13	?	?	2
1880	?	?	?	2
1881	-	10	14	-
1882	5	6	11	-
1883	8	4	-	-
1884	2	13	20	-
1885	39	45	---	---
	105	159	311	24

All statistics are not totally correct because for some years some numbers in the records are missing.

4.1.c: Age of the adult baptized ex-slaves:

Year	number	age	number	age
1871	3	20 years	1	23 years
	1	21 years	1	24 years
	1	22 years	1	25 years
	1	23 years	1	50 years
	1	24 years		
	1	25 years		
1872	6	20 years	1	25 years
	1	21 years	1	30 years
	1	22 years	1	40 years
	1	23 years	1	45 years
	1	24 years	1	50 years
1873	14 adults,	ages not mentioned		
1874	1 adult,	ages not mentioned		
1875	1 adult,	ages not mentioned		
1876	2	21 years	1	57 years
	1	24 years	1	60 years
	1	29 years	1	
1877	1	51 years	1	70 years
1878	2	20 years	1	25 years
	1	21 years	1	30 years
	3	22 years	1	34 years
			1	35 years
1879	?	?	?	?
1880	1	24 years		
1881	5	21 years		
	1	22 years		
	1	23 years		
1882	3	20 years	1	35 years
	1	22 years	1	40 years
	1	24 years	1	45 years
	1	25 years	1	50 years
	1	30 years		

1883	1	20 years
1884	1	20 years
	1	21 years
	1	22 years
1885	-	----------

Age of the adults altogether:

20 years	14	34 years 1
21 years	4	35 years 2
22 years	7	40 years 3
23 years	3	45 years 3
24 years	5	50 years 3
25 years	3	57 years 1
29 years	1	60 years 1
30 years	1	70 years 1

For 16 adults the age is not mentioned.

5. The end of Slavery:

5.1 During our period (1870 –1885) 1,377 slaves were ransomed by the catholic missionaries and 338 freed by British and French Anti-Slavery ships. They were at the end of the 1880s settled in 6 "Freedom Villages". These numbers may indicate the number of non liberated slaves in Bagamoyo and surroundings. Altogether 769, 500 (=51,7%) of all slaves were retained on Zanzibar, Pemba and on the East African coast during the 19th century (9); a good number of them in Bagamoyo.

We presume that those slaves retained in Bagamoyo were not taken at first to the central slave market in Zanzibar and then returned to Bagamoyo. They might have been bought in Bagamoyo by their future slave masters. This was for sure the case after 1873 when Sultan Bargash of Zanzibar had to close his central slaves market in Zanzibar within 24 hours. From now on the Catholic missionaries could also ransom slaves on the spot.

Illiffe says in his mentioned book that homeborn children of slaves possessed higher status. They were rarely sold and could marry freeborn women. If both parents were slaves, their children remained in slavery. A marriage contract from Bagamoyo says: "If my master comes (to show) I am a slave, the woman will be devorced" (10).

Slaves revolted several times or run away. Some succeeded to establish their own independent "republic" at Kikokwe , probably shortly before 1873. Nobody was hunting them. It seems that the supervision was not too strong. It is interesting that the self-liberated slaves of Kikokwe allied with Bushiri in 1888 against the Germans in the so called Budhiri war (11).

In the "free of slaves society" on the Catholic compound the freed ex-slaves could freely marry, they were not more sold, they enjoyed their freedom. But also in the "Christian Freeedom village" we register "riots". In 1880 villagers of St. Josephs Village in Bagamoyo went on strike. The best educated young men were the ones who started. Their aim was to demonstrate against the too strict village-regulations. The missionaries saw that their reasons were considerable and introduced a three – stage-program. In three stages the villagers could develop the village in to a totally selfreliant village.

Also here we see different situations at the same place Bagamoyo: the slave based society and the slaves free society.

5.2 Two years marked the end of slavery

In 1873, England forced Sultan Bargash of Zanzibar to close the central slave market in Zanzibar. But from now on slaves could be obtained anywhere.

In 1890 the European Governments came together in Brusselles for the Anti-Slavery Conference. Under the 1890-Act of Anti –Slavery slaves were granted:

- religious freedom
- freedom to marry
- free food and lodging
- two days free every week
- the right to possess own property
- the right to inherit parts of the property of the slave master
- families could not be separated by beeing sold to different slave masters.

The slave owners got this cataloque of rights of the slaves as an order which they had to keep.

Germany, signatory of the Act of Brusselles, introduced different ways to obtain freedom for slaves:

- by ransoming as up to now
- by releasing by the slave master
- by court decision in case of mistreatment by the slave owner
- by self-ransoming (12).

According to two documents of the German Colonial Administration, kept in the Archives of the Catholic Parish in Bagamoyo, slaves were set free:

Year	Ransomed	Released	by court	other reasons	
1901	104	62	50	5	
1906	69	85	4	3	(13)

From 1980 the German Colonial Administration certified the liberation of slaves with a document of freedom, also called "Deed of Freedom".

We have 22 such "Deeds of Freedom" in the Parish Archives in Bagamoyo which tell interesting details and show

the situation of slaves at the end of the 19th century. We get to know the ages of the slaves, their work, names of slave owners in Bagamoyo and surroundings and ways of liberation. Slavery was totally abolished in Tanganyika in 1922.

We give the following summary of the "Freedom Deeds":

Year	No	Particulars	Ways of liberation
1891	1	Female, 12 years, plantation slave of Kikolo/Mandera	ransomed by the missionaries
1899	2	Female, 30 years, plantation slave of Mhomba/Mtonga	ransomed by the missionaries
1899	3	Male, 5 years, slave of Mhomba/ Mtonga	ransomed by the missionaries
1899	4	Male, 16 years, slave of Mhomba/ Mtonga	ransomed by the missionaries
1899	5	Male, 3 years, plantation slave of Mhomba/Mtonga	ransomed by the missionaries
1899	6	Male, 1 year, slave of Mhomba/Mtonga	ransomed by the missionaries
1899	7	Female, 20 years, plantation slave of Seliman/Wanyasa	ransomed by the missionaries
1905	8	Female, 24 years, plantation slave of Mamtiva/Makubika	ransomed by the missionaries
1905	9	Male, 17 years, plantation slave of Mlatehe/Rosako	ransomed by the missionaries

1905	10	Female, 35 years plantation slave of Mbayalla/Wame-Kuduga	by court
1907	11	Female, 40 years, plantation slave of Jumbe Kingaru/ Suma (dead) She has a child (Masara) which is free because born after the 31th of December 1905	ransomed by her husband Maiwanda
1907	12	Female, 28 years, plantation slave of Jumbe Maigwa/ Magubika	by court
1907	13	Male, 12 years, slave of Mawingwa Kirase/ Wuma	ransomed by the missionaries
1907	14	Male, 15 years, plantation slave of Kingaru/Mandera	by self-ransoming
1908	15	Male, 35 years, plantation slave of Likumiri/Miano	released by his slave master
1909	16	Female 25 years, slave of Mikimira/ Mandera	released by her slave master
1909	17	Male, 8 years, slave of Mikimira/Mandera	released by his slave master
1909	18	Female, 38 years, plantation slave Kondila/Kikowe	ransomed by the missionaries

1914	19	Male, age not mentioned, slave of Mwalimu Josef Sefu/Lugoba	ransomed by the missionaries
1914	20	Male, age not mentioned, slave owner and place not mentioned	ransomed by the missionaries
1915	21	Male, 45 years, plantation slave of Kaogo/Madesa	ransomed by the missionaries
1915	22	Female, 45 years, plantation slave of Kaogo/Madesa	ransomed by the missionaries

Interesting is that all mentioned names of the slave owners are names of Africans. Also Africans were slave owners. Even a Mwalimu Josef Sefu in Lugoba. The name "Josef" indicates that he is a Christian? Even Christians were involved in slavery? One female slave was ransomed by the missionaries from Kondola/Kikokwe. Even the self-liberated ex-slaves of Kikokwe or their offsprings kept slaves?

13 Persons are ransomed by the missionaries; 3 by court decision and 3 were released by their slave masters. One woman was ransomed by her husband. Was he a free-born African or was he already ransomed or set free in one way or another? One young boy of 15 years could buy himself freedom. From his own money or had he got money from some one?

Interesting is that two slave owners released their slaves, one male and two adult females.

The numbers 2-6 seem to be a mother with her 4 children of different ages, up to now slaves of Mhomba in Mtonga and now ransomed by the missionaries. All slaves, ransomed by the missionaries, were ransomed in Bagamoyo and Mandera, the second foundation after Bagamoyo.

Slavery was still concentrated on plantation work; but it was coming slowly to the end; with consequences for the economy of the town as we shall see, consequences which up to now imprints the towns life.

6. Final conclusions:

Our last research shows that not only "Arabs" were involved in slavery, but Africans as well, even Christians. Many slaves seem to be working as plantation slaves. Around 1890/1900 slavery dried out. It was the same time when the economy of Bagamoyo collapsed - because of two reasons.

The harbour of Bagamoyo is not deep enough for modern deep-draught steamships. Dar es Salaam had better harbour facilities for the modern ocean traffic. Bagamoyos economy declined the more Dar es Salaam prospered, up to now a small fishermen village, but with a residence of the Sultan of Zanzibar. In the late 1890s the inhabitants of Bagamoyo got the sad news that no railway line would connect Bagamoyo with the new railway terminus in Dar es Salaam. Soon the Arab and Indian trademen left Bagamoyo and built up new trade centres in Dar es Salaam. Still, German companies, so the Hansing Firm, opened vanilla plantations; also based on slave work. But now the economy of Bagamoyohad already declined. The "hour of death" became inescapable for Bagamoyo when slavery dried out. The plantation economy collapsed. The plantation economy collapsed the more slaves were set

free. The freed slaves were not willing to do the work they had done as slaves any longer. To work on the fields with the own hands was regarded as "slave work" and rejected. Many of the ransomed or released ex-slaves tried to establish their own "business of the upper class" and started small shops; a reality which up to now imprints the towns economy, but which is by no means an income generator.

So the decline of the towns economy at the beginning of the 20th century is due to the fact that now Dar es Salaam prospered, but also due to the end of the slavery.

Around 1900 the "Christian Villages" were no longer necessary. The villagers left, either to their home areas or they settled in the town.

It would be interesting to do a survey in the town of Bagamoyo to get to know how many still remember grandparents or grand-grandparents who were either slave owners or slaves. Up to now the life of so many people in Bagamoyo is still affected by slavery.

Used literature:

(1) Paul E. Lovejoy: "Transformation of slavery", Cambridge University Press, reprint 1997, pp 25, 68,150.

(2) Paul E. Lovejoy, o.c., p 151,

(3) Paul E. Lovejoy, o.c., p 151

(4) Walter T. Brown. "Bagamoyo - An Historical Introduction", Tanzania Notes and Records No 71 (1970), p 75

(5) John Iliffe: "A Modern History of Tanganyika", Cambridge University Press, reprint 1994, p 129

(6) Walter T. Brown, o.c., p. 76

(7) John Iliffe, o.c., p 129

(8) + (9) + (10) John Iliffe, o.c., p 73

(11) John Iliffe, o.c., p. 73 +93

(12) Informations in the R.C. Museum, Bagamoyo: "Abolition of Slavery" /Room I

(13) Archives of the R.C. Museum, Bagamoyo.

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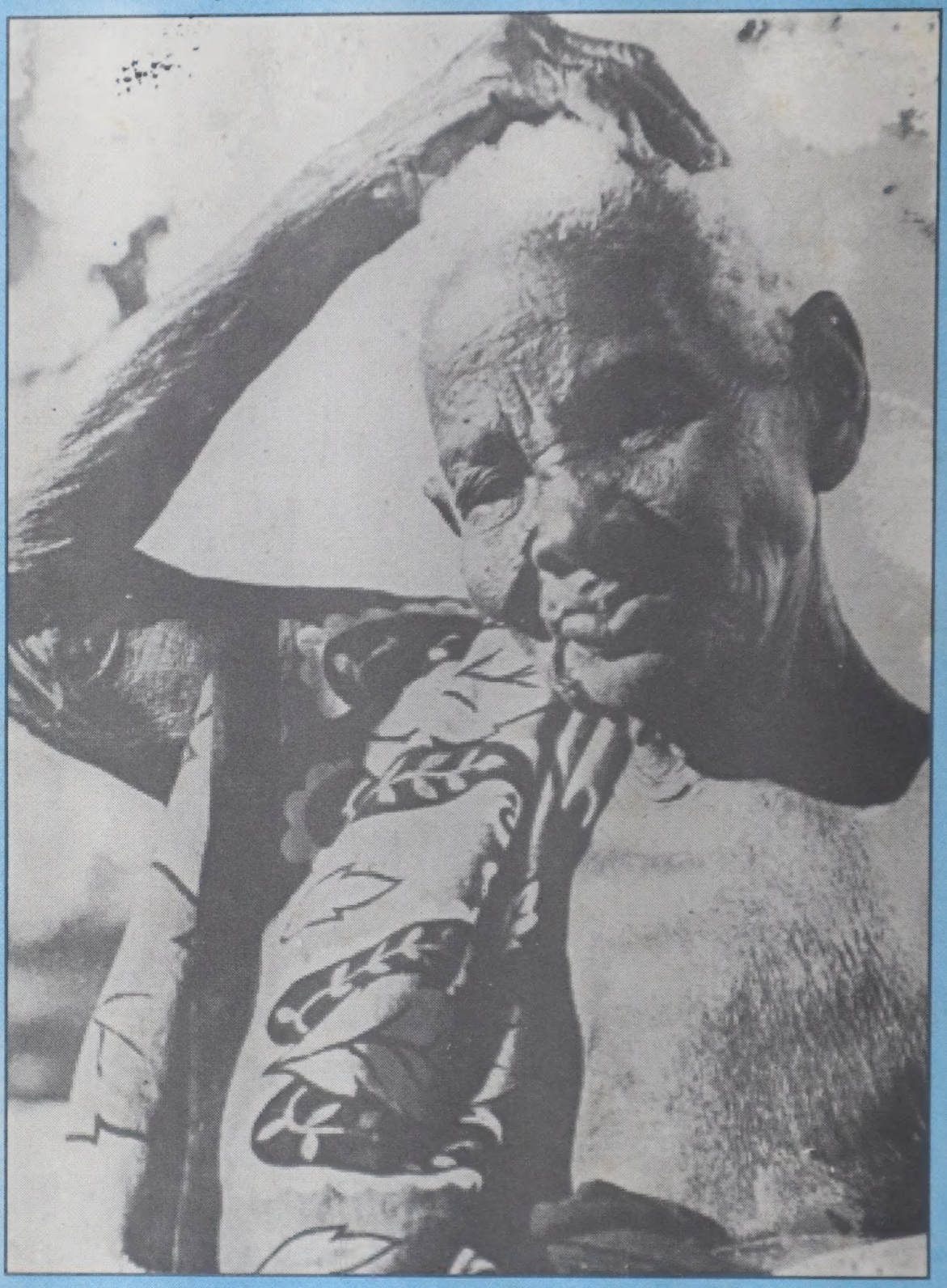

Maria Ernestina, last known ex-slave,
died in Bagamoyo in 1974